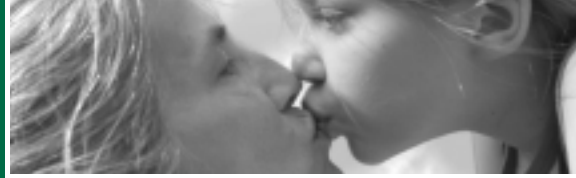




## The Progress Report



Issue 1 · Fall 2004

### State Dental Association Follows Appleseed's Lead

Recognizing that lack of access to dentists is a major barrier to health care, Appleseed in 2003 developed a pilot program that recruited between 10 and 20 private dentists to volunteer at two public health clinics in and near Hartford. One of

Appleseed's collaborating professionals, Dr. Michael Perl, is responsible for that success by tirelessly recruiting his fellow dentists. In cooperation with the Connecticut Primary Care Association, Michael's volunteers continue to serve the Community Health Services clinic in North Hartford, where 2/3 of the clinic's 55,000 annual visitors are African-American.



This summer Dr. Perl took a bolder step, encouraging the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA) to prioritize areas in the state with the greatest needs and create a committee (which he chairs) to advance volunteer service

among its members. In July Michael had been asked by Appleseed to expand his recruitment efforts to the New Haven area. After verifying that CSDA had not established geographical priorities that needed to be honored, Dr. Perl challenged CSDA to consider doing so.

#### Gaining CSDA's Commitment to Help

CSDA jumped at the challenge and reallocated its staff time to coordinate a geographic review of needs across the state. Michael stands at the center of effort, chairing the CSDA committee charged with increasing and channeling volunteer activity. Dr. Perl also shares his Hartford recruitment experiences with dentists in Connecticut's local dental societies who volunteer to recruit others in their locality.

*Continued on Page 3*

### Stars Aligning for Literacy Project Helping Children of Inmates

It betrays a touch of genius when a person mobilizes his unique experience and insight to fill unmet needs. After founding two hugely successful national non-profits (Reading is Fundamental and Jobs for the Future), Appleseed board member Arthur White married those passions with his role as educational advisor to the US Bureau of Prisons to weave the fabric of yet another creation – our Children, Inmates and Caregiver Connections (CIC Connections) ([www.ctappleseed.org/projects](http://www.ctappleseed.org/projects)) project.

#### Criminal Justice's Systemic Failure: Re-Entry

The educational and emotional tolls on families of the incarcerated can be devastating. CIC Connections proposes to increase literacy and emotional well-being among children with inmate parents through a comprehensive program that integrates technology, education and mentoring. The program is designed to use literacy training, reading and email-based discussions about books as vehicles to

*Continued on Page 3*

#### Also In this Issue:

- 2 Our Board of Directors
- 2 The Strategist: Board Member Peter Libassi
- 4 CT Appleseed Launches Its New Web Site



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## The Strategist: Board Member Peter Libassi

**M**ore than 70% of children enrolled in Connecticut's Medicaid program do not receive *any* dental care. For every child without medical insurance, there are 2.6 who lack dental insurance. But the problem continues to worsen. Since reimbursement rates for private dentists willing to treat Medicaid clients have not been adjusted for inflation in more than 10 years, fewer and fewer private practitioners are motivated to treat for such clients.

How then to improve access to dental care for the disadvantaged?

It's a rare individual with the breadth of vision to devise a multi-faceted strategy and the stature to drive the solution. Perhaps his two stints with the federal Health, Education and Welfare Department during Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and again in the Jimmy Carter administration as General Counsel taught him to think big. Perhaps his personal network in the Hartford area (board memberships at the Connecticut Health Foundation ("CHF"), the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts and the Hartford Seminary) give him confidence. Certainly founding the Children's Fund of Connecticut before retiring as a Senior Vice President of the Travelers Insurance Company helped to establish his credibility.

More often than not, Peter Libassi is the man behind the scenes. As lead Board member on CHF's Oral Health committee, he guided development of the strategic plan for CHF's oral health program initiative. When CHF Executive Director Pat Baker wanted to suggest that the Connecticut State Dental Association ("CSDA") undertake a volunteerism initiative, Pat asked Peter to conceive and draft it. Peter is the linchpin of Connecticut Appleseed's approaching legislative collaboration with CSDA to increase the supply of dental providers willing to serve the underprivileged.

Peter's strategy led CHF's consultants to assemble comparative information for revising the state's strict licensing laws



*Board Member Peter Libassi*

regarding foreign-trained dentists. It also included harnessing Appleseed's pro bono legal resources to draft legislation to allow foreign-trained dentists to be licensed in Connecticut if they agree to work in underserved areas for a period of 2 years. Another way to increase the supply of dental providers is revising state licensing laws to allow dental staff to perform more services. Some states authorize "Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries" (EFDA's) to handle routine, reversible services like filling drilled holes to increase the productivity of dentists. Unsurprisingly, Peter will lead Appleseed's legislative collaboration with CSDA to legitimize and broaden the role of EFDA's.

His strategy also reflects the huge dental school debt borne by young dentists. CHF hopes to revise Connecticut's loan repayment program to help offset debts or supplement income for dentists willing to devote a threshold percentage of their time to public health clinics. Lastly, Peter's strategy includes collaboration with the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative ("COHI") and other stakeholders to encourage dentists to accept Medicaid children in their offices by lifting Connecticut's Medicaid reimbursement rates.

Lack of access to dental care for the poor is an intransigent problem that defied solution. A multi-pronged strategy and a host of mini-fixes are needed to even make a dent. A perfect assignment for Appleseed's consummate strategist – the soft-spoken Peter Libassi.



## Literacy Project continued from page 1

improve communications, heal strained interpersonal relationships and form lasting family connections. A secondary benefit would improve the literacy and job-related computer skills of the inmates.

As the Federal Bureau of Corrections struggles to cope with deep and frequent budget cuts, the system penalizes not only inmates – who are in dire need of literacy training and job training while incarcerated – but their families as well. Children and family members suffer further as poorly prepared inmates struggle to transition from prison back to the community. CIC Connections shines a ray of hope on this gloomy scenario by offering the capacity to begin the healing process during incarceration and facilitate the inmate's re-entry process by enhancing their employability.

### Replicating the Model

In response to Arthur White's advice, the US Bureau of Prisons has encouraged our project from the beginning because of the potential for its nationwide applicability. With Connecticut Appleseed's initial efforts focused initially on program development, expenses thus far have been quite minimal – thanks to generous pro bono donations from our project's leadership team and small grants

from both Toys R Us and the Wellspring Trust. But in anticipation of successful testing in the Danbury, CT Federal Correctional Institution this fall, we are now aggressively soliciting funds to realize the ambitious project's broad vision.

### IBM Offers Support

CIC Connections relies in no small part on literacy volunteers who must be recruited and trained, then matched with selected inmates and inmate family volunteers. The literacy levels of the three participating groups must also be assessed by literacy volunteers to provide benchmarks and a basis for selecting appropriate books.

We are delighted that IBM Corporation has agreed to support the program through active recruiting as volunteers of its employees and its 4,000-plus retirees in Connecticut. These volunteers will be trained primarily to assist with literacy training and, secondarily, to work as mentors with inmates and their families. IBM also may donate servers to host the secure email platform.

### Funding Push Begins

Funds are needed to refine our technology tools, to coordinate volunteer efforts, to set up and manage the secure email platform, to design evaluation protocols and for a host of



other tasks. We therefore are launching a fund-raising campaign this Fall that will focus on both regional (e.g., the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund) and national (e.g., the Public Welfare Foundation) foundations and Connecticut-based corporate foundations such as the Aetna Foundation. We also are competing for a portion of the \$1 million recently allocated by Connecticut's state government to foster successful re-entry projects.

### Measurement and Evaluation

Appleseed is partnering with Mr. Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College's Graduate School for Justice, to develop evaluation tools that will measure results from our pilot testing at the Danbury facility and at a second federal prison in Florida. These findings will be used to refine the program prior to implementation in other locations.

### An Inspiration for Retirees

At 80, Arthur White makes every minute count and shows no sign of slowing down. With a resume that also includes founding Yankelovich Partners (formerly Yankelovich, Skelly & White), chairing the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority from 1975 to 1991 and appointment by President Clinton to the National Commission for Employment Policy, his connections are legendary. Foundation heads typically greet him with "Whatever Arthur wants from us, he can have." We're fortunate indeed to have Arthur as a board member, as we all have a lot to learn from him.

## State Dental Association continued from page 1



Dr. Michael Perl

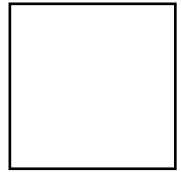
In raising the profile of volunteerism at CSDA, Michael has also been helped by Appleseed's Peter Libassi – who drafted an outline of various

options available to dentists wishing to volunteer. At risk of oversimplifying, while some dentists choose to volunteer at a public health clinic, others may prefer to

provide pro bono services from their private offices.

### Bringing Volunteerism to New Haven and Bridgeport

Dr. Perl eventually will begin recruiting volunteers to similarly assist public health clinics for Medicaid eligible children in the New Haven area, as Appleseed initially requested. But by coordinating with CSDA and triggering their initiative, he has multiplied the potential effect of his efforts many times over.



## Mission Statement

Connecticut Appleseed is a statewide, non-partisan public interest organization dedicated to building a more just society through legal and legislative advocacy, negotiation, education and policy expertise. Our mission is to produce solutions for the causes, rather than the symptoms of our state's social problems. We are committed to engineering and achieving structural changes that will benefit Connecticut's most disadvantaged and disenfranchised citizens. We therefore deploy the skills and energies of volunteering lawyers and other professionals to drive specific systemic changes on legal matters and social issues that are not being successfully addressed by other organizations.

## CT Appleseed Launches Its New Web Site

Connecticut Appleseed is delighted to announce that we launched our revamped and expanded web site ([www.ctappleseed.org](http://www.ctappleseed.org)) earlier this month. After revitalizing the Center in 2003, the entire Board of Directors has understandably been eager to elaborate on Connecticut Appleseed's recent activities and create an interactive communications vehicle.

Board Chairman Martin Budd enthused "We're excited about our growing portfolio of projects and the breadth of our collaborations. We naturally wanted to share that good news and reach out to additional organizations and individuals who might be interested in joining with us. With three additional projects in the planning stage, we expect to post further news when we distribute our initial print newsletter during the 4th quarter".

Executive Director Bob Kettle adds "Since we're working aggressively to expand our

Board of Directors and meet potential collaborators across the state, it's much more efficient to be able to point people to a web site where they can conveniently view the scope of our projects. A current and comprehensive web site is absolutely indispensable in this period when broadening familiarity with Connecticut Appleseed is a top priority. We're also able to conserve resources because the web site's architecture enables relatively inexpensive newsletters that reflect and borrow from the web site, avoiding the need to design each issue from scratch."

Bob elaborated "One of the many benefits Connecticut Appleseed receives from our parent national Appleseed Foundation is the ability to learn from the experience of other Centers. In consulting with the Centers about their communications, we heard the DC Appleseed Center ([www.dcappleseed.org](http://www.dcappleseed.org)) enthusiastically recommend a local firm named Cambigue Design. As a result, rather

than being forced to scour the vast web design marketplace, we were able to shortcut the process and find this creative and efficient 1-person "shop". Cambigue Design was unusually motivated to do an absolutely terrific job for us because they applaud Appleseed's goals and hope to garner additional work from other Centers."

"A current and comprehensive web site is absolutely indispensable in this period when broadening familiarity with Connecticut Appleseed is a top priority."

- Bob Kettle,  
Executive Director